

Message Text

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PAGE 01 JIDDA 04178 060442Z
ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EUR-12 PM-05 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15
CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 DODE-00 MCT-01 /062 W
-----080819 060605Z /11
R 051415Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2269

S E C R E T JIDDA 4178

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, PLO, SA
SUBJECT: MEETING WITH PRINCE TURKI

1. ON THE EVENING OF 3 JUNE, I MET WITH PRINCE TURKI AL FAISAL, CHIEF OF THE GENERAL INTELLIGENCE DIRECTORATE. DURING THE COURSE OF THE MEETING, PRINCE TURKI SAID THAT KHALID AL HASSAN (PROMINENT MEMBER OF THE PLO) HAD JUST PAID A VISIT TO THE KINGDOM DURING WHICH HE TOLD PRINCE TURKI HAD HAD RECEIVED AN INVITATION TO VISIT MOSCOW. AFTER SOME CONSULTATION WITH PLO LEADER YASSIR ARAFAT, THEY BOTH DECIDED IT WAS BEST THAT HE ACCEPT THE INVITATION. ACCORDING TO PRINCE TURKI, HASSAN WILL BE VISITING MOSCOW IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE.

2. HASSAN'S TRIP TO MOSCOW BROUGHT OUT SEVERAL INTERESTING OBSERVATIONS BY PRINCE TURKI ON THE CURRENT STATUS OF THE PLO AND SAUDI SUPPORT FOR ARAFAT. PRINCE TURKI SAID THAT THE CURRENT CHALLENGE TO ARAFAT'S LEADERSHIP IS BASED ON THE PERCEPTION BY THE RADICAL ELEMENTS THAT THE RIGHT-WING AND MODERATE FACTION (FATH) WITHIN THE PLO HAS BEEN STEADILY GAINING IN STRENGTH. THE RADICALS HAVE CHOSEN TO COUNTER THIS BY A DIRECT CHALLENGE TO ARAFAT'S LEADERSHIP. ACCORDING TO PRINCE TURKI, THE INVITATION TO HASSAN AT THIS JUNCTURE IS VERY IMPORTANT. HASSAN TOLD HIM THAT ABU IYAD AND
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ABU SALIH WERE BOTH AFRAID THAT ARAFAT WAS PLANNING TO MOVE AGAINST THE RADICAL ELEMENTS IN THE PLO. THE FACT THAT HASSAN IS GOING TO MOSCOW WILL ALLAY THEIR FEARS AS THE SOVIETS WILL BE SEEKING TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH ARAFAT AND FATH, AND THIS SHOULD ALSO BENEFIT THE RADICAL ELEMENTS IN THE PLO. HASSAN TOLD TURKI THAT BOTH HE AND ARAFAT FELT THAT THE MODERATE WING OF THE

PLO WAS STRONG ENOUGH TO BRUSH ASIDE ANY CHALLENGE FROM THE RADICAL ELEMENTS, THUS THEY SAW NO DANGER IN HASSAN'S TRIP TO MOSCOW.

3. PRINCE TURKI SAID THAT THE SAUDIS HAVE DECIDED THAT THE CURRENT CHALLENGE TO ARAFAT'S LEADERSHIP DOES NOT POSE ANY REAL DIFFICULTIES FOR HIM. BASED ON THIS CONCLUSION, THE SAUDIS HAVE DECIDED TO CONTINUE TO SUPPORT HIM. PRINCE TURKI ADDED THAT ALTHOUGH THEY HAVE BEEN DISAPPOINTED WITH ARAFAT IN THE PAST, PARTICULARLY LAST AUGUST WHEN HE TURNED ASIDE SAUDI URGINGS THAT HE RECOGNIZE 242, THEY DO NOT FEEL THERE IS ANY REAL ALTERNATIVE TO ARAFAT.

4. COMMENT: THE SAUDI DECISION TO CONTINUE TO SUPPORT ARAFAT VIRTUALLY ASSURES HIS SURVIVAL (BARRING AN ASSASSIN'S BULLET) AS HEAD OF THE PLO. IN PRACTICAL TERMS, THE SAUDI DECISION MEANS THAT THEY WILL CONTINUE TO CHANNEL THEIR FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO THE PLO THROUGH ARAFAT.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: INFORMATION EXCHANGE, PALESTINIANS, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, INVITATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 05 jun 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978JIDDA04178
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780235-0600
Format: TEL
From: JIDDA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780697/aaaadfip.tel
Line Count: 83
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: cd913d92-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 jul 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2493354
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MEETING WITH PRINCE TURKI
TAGS: PEPR, SA, UR, PLO, (TURKI, PRINCE), (AL HASSAN, KHALID)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/cd913d92-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014